

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

EDEP 621 001: Qualitative Inquiry in Education

3 Credits, Fall 2016

Mondays 7:20-10:00 pm

Thompson Hall, Room L019 (Fairfax Campus)

PROFESSOR

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*email is the best way to contact me

Prerequisites: EDRS 590 or equivalent experience.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the study of basic application of naturalistic research methods. It examines major theoretical frameworks, and qualitative research techniques, which include participant observation, interviewing, coding, and interpretation of data. (Prerequisite: EDRS 590 or equivalent)

NATURE OF COURSE DELIVERY

This course is designed to be highly interactive as students are guided through the process of learning to use, conduct, and write about qualitative research in education. The course will be taught using lectures, class discussions, and individual and group activities. Technologies such as web-based discussion boards and qualitative research software may also serve as a medium for instruction. Students should be prepared to participate and lead discussions during each class meeting.

For those in the Educational Psychology master's program, review the student Handbook:

<http://cehd.gmu.edu/documents/epsychology/edpsych-handbook.pdf>

LEARNER OUTCOMES

This course is designed to enable students to:

- Gain a basic understanding of current qualitative research methods and the theories and epistemologies that have influenced their development.
- Gain experience with data collection techniques including participant observation and qualitative interviewing.
- Gain an understanding of basic approaches to qualitative data analysis and interpretation, including categorization strategies such as coding and matrices, and connecting strategies such as case studies
- Find, understand, evaluate, and apply published research that is relevant to their field.
- Thoughtfully consider ethical issues in qualitative research
- Thoughtfully consider validity issues in qualitative research

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM GOALS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

The program goals are consistent with the following Learner-centered psychological principles (APA Division 15) outlined by the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force in Education.

- Principle 1: The Nature of Learning Process
- Principle 2: Goals of the Learning Process
- Principle 3: Construction of Knowledge
- Principle 4: Strategic Thinking
- Principle 5: Thinking about Thinking
- Principle 6: Context of Learning
- Principle 7: Motivational and Emotional Influences on Learning
- Principle 8: Intrinsic Motivation to Learn
- Principle 9: Effects of Motivation on Affect
- Principle 10: Developmental Influences on Learning
- Principle 11: Social Influences on Learning
- Principle 12: Individual Differences on Learning
- Principle 13: Learning and Diversity
- Principle 14: Standards and Assessment

For more information please see:

American Psychological Association (1997). *Learner-centered psychological principles: A framework for school redesign and reform*.

<http://www.apa.org/ed/governance/bea/learner-centered.pdf>

Retrieved August 25, 2011.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

RECOMMENDED TEXT

Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interviewing*. New York: Free Press.

Additional required articles will be drawn from the GMU electronic databases or available on **Blackboard**.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation 10%

During class sessions in this course, we work on learning concepts, practicing the craft of qualitative research, and reflecting and analyzing research. It is essential to your learning that you come prepared to thoughtfully participate. Please complete required readings and participate thoughtfully in class activities and discussions. More than one absence, except under extenuating circumstances, will automatically lower your participation grade. (See end of syllabus for participation rubric.)

2. Article critique 30%

You will write a critical analysis of a qualitative research article on a topic you choose to pursue for the duration of the semester. (See end of syllabus for article critique rubric.)

EDRS 621 Article Critique Assignment

The EDRS 621 (Qualitative Inquiry in Education) article critique assessment is a paper that requires analysis and critique of a scholarly article based on a qualitative research study. It satisfies the performance-based assessment for students in the Educational Psychology master's program. The

assignment requires candidates: (1) to carefully and critically read a study using qualitative methods, and (2) to analyze and critique the author's methods. **Students must upload their article critiques to Blackboard in the Assignment Section in a timely fashion.**

ARTICLE CRITIQUE UPLOAD REQUIREMENT (*Important!*)

Every student registered for any Educational Psychology course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment to Blackboard (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course, or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Blackboard will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Blackboard submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

3. Research Memos 30%

You will be regularly writing memos in response to prompts, both during class and as outside assignments that you will turn as a collection. (See end of syllabus for research memo rubric.)

4. Interview project 30%

You will write an interview protocol, conduct a 1 to 1.5 hour interview, transcribe the interview and write an analytic memo. Your focus for this interview must be related to your chosen research topic for the class. (See end of syllabus for evaluation criteria for interview project.)

Scoring

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following:

A+ = 98 – 100%	A = 93 – 97.99%	A- = 90 – 92.99%
B+ = 88 – 89.99%	B = 83 – 87.99%	B- = 80 – 82.99%
C = 70 – 79.99%	F < 70%	

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

Paper Format

- 1 inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Include the following information: title, name, date, professor, course number.
- All papers should be proofread for spelling, grammar, and clarity errors; citation and references in APA format.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due submitted in Blackboard at or before the start of class on the assigned due date. Late assignments will be marked down by half a letter grade for each day the assignment is late. If there are questions or concerns about a particular situation, please contact me via email in advance of the deadline.

PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS:

Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT

The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.

<http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>

GMU POLICIES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/api/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing (see <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance (see <http://caps.gmu.edu/>).
- The George Mason University Office of Student Support staff helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate campus and off-campus resources. Students in need of these services may contact the office by phone (703-993-5376). Concerned students, faculty and staff may also make a referral to express concern for the safety or well-being of a Mason student or the community by going to <http://studentsupport.gmu.edu/>, and the OSS staff will follow up with the student.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/>.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website <http://gse.gmu.edu/>

Course Schedule*

*This is a tentative course schedule which may change. The most current schedule will be available on the Blackboard site.

Date	Class Topics/Activities	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 Aug 29	<p>Introduction to qualitative research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to qualitative research. • Overview of course and syllabus • Discussion of texts, assignments • Discussion of major goals for the class <p>Diving Into Participant Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are field notes? • Participant observation activity 	Review syllabus.
Week 2 Sep 5	<i>Labor Day: University Closed</i>	
Week 3 Sep 12	<p>The Logic of Qualitative Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative vs. quantitative research • Research and belief systems • Personal attributes and ethics <p>Participant Observation Discussion</p>	Yin, Ch 1 <i>What is Qualitative Research</i> Yin, Ch 2 (pp. 27-32 & 40-52 only) <i>Getting Ready to Do Qualitative Research</i> Maxwell, Ch 1 <i>A Model for Qualitative Research Design</i> Memo 1 due (assignment on Blackboard)
Week 4 Sep 19	<p>Coming to Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss research goals • Pair swap of memo, discuss • “Types” of qualitative research <p>Getting a feel for participant observation In-class observation and memos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maker interviews (open and with framework)	Yin, Ch 3 (pp. 65-70 & 76-80 only) <i>How to Start a Qualitative Research Study</i> Yin, Ch 5 (pp. 121-131 only) Maxwell, Ch 2 <i>Goals</i> Memo 2 due (assignment on Blackboard)
Week 5 Sept 26	<p>Qualitative research design: Making design choices and locating your goals in a broader conceptual context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of qualitative research designs • Establishing conceptual context. • Designing research questions • Discuss sources for finding qualitative research articles 	Yin, Ch 4 <i>Choices in Designing Qualitative Studies</i> Maxwell, Ch 3 <i>Conceptual Framework</i> Maxwell, Ch 4 <i>Research Questions</i> OPTIONAL: Yin, Ch. 3 (pp. 56-64 only) Memo 3 due (assignment on Blackboard)

<p>Week 6 Oct 3</p>	<p>Diving Into Interviewing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strengths of interviewing • Educational history pilot interview <p>*Note: people who have laptops it would be helpful to bring them in for this session so we can have recorders of interviews.</p>	<p>Seidman, Ch 1 <i>Why Interview?</i> (<u>On Bb</u>)</p> <p>Yin, Ch 6 (pp. 140-150 only)</p> <p>Weiss, Ch 4 <i>Interviewing</i> (<u>On Bb</u>)</p> <p>Memo 4 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 7 TUE, Oct 11</p>	<p>Qualitative Research Design: Aligning Purposes, Conceptual Context and Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Konopasky review articles • Discuss choice of interview participant(s), review guidelines • Workshop conceptual framework and research questions 	<p><i>Review</i> Maxwell readings</p> <p>Bring in copies of at least 2 articles you are thinking of using for the critique.</p> <p>Read Stevens et al. for critique workshop (<u>article on Bb</u>).</p> <p>Memo 5 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 8 Oct 17</p>	<p>Reading Qualitative Research from a Design Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial discussion of validity • Workshop and discussion on articles for <i>article critique</i> assignment: Focus on validity threats • Discussion on key factors in understanding and evaluating qualitative studies 	<p><i>Review</i> Maxwell, Ch 1 & Yin, Ch. 4</p> <p>Maxwell, Ch 6 <i>Validity</i></p> <p>Memo 6 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 9 Oct 24</p>	<p>Qualitative Research Design: Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical issues (Informed consent, confidentiality) • Data Collection techniques: Interviews • Connecting Questions and Methods • Discussion of proposed sites, workshop on informed consent, interview protocols, cover memos. • Discuss assignment guidelines 	<p>Yin, Ch 7 <i>Recording Data</i></p> <p>Maxwell, Ch 5, <i>Methods</i></p> <p>Johnson-Bailey's <i>Dancing Between the Swords</i> (<u>on Bb</u>)</p> <p>Memo 7 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>

<p>Week 10 Oct 31</p>	<p>Qualitative Research Design: Data Analysis and Iterative Process (Design→Analysis→Re-Design...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of article critique assignments—critique from a design perspective • Writing Informed Consent • Designing Interview Protocol <p>(If time, begin this)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting research questions guiding educational background pilot interviews • Open-coding of pilot educational interviews • Discussion of key ideas, revisiting and reframing research questions. • Development of a code list 	<p>Yin, Ch 8 <i>Analyzing Qualitative Data, I</i></p> <p>Excerpt from Saldana’s <i>Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers</i> (on Bb)</p> <p>Revisit section on Data Analysis (p. 95-103) in Maxwell, Ch 5 <i>Methods</i></p> <p>ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE</p>
<p>Week 11 Nov 7</p>	<p>Qualitative Research Design: Data Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing the analysis in data collection/documentation • Further discussion of data analysis techniques. • Comparing methods • Connecting methods 	<p>Yin, Ch 9 <i>Analyzing Qualitative Data, II</i></p> <p>Maxwell’s Comparing and connecting methods (on Bb)</p> <p>Memo 8 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 12 Nov 14</p>	<p>Validity Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the “validity threats” specific to your research study • Proposing strategies to address validity issues. • Carrying out, assessing the effectiveness and revising validity strategies 	<p>Maxwell’s “Understanding and validity in qualitative research” (on Bb)</p> <p>Memo 9 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 13 Nov 21</p>	<p>Data Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on interview analysis and write-up <p>Validity Strategies (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you be wrong? • Anticipating and planning for potential <i>specific</i> validity threats 	<p>Yin, Ch 11 <i>Composing Research to Share with Others</i></p> <p>Memo 10 due (assignment on Blackboard)</p>

<p>Week 14 Nov 28</p>	<p>Computer-Aided Data Storage And Analysis and Team Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO, ATLAS.ti). • Tutorial and sample project. <p>Cognitive Interviewing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit into qualitative research? <p>Mixing Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and conceptual framework • Validity 	<p>Willis' "how-to" on cognitive interviewing: http://www.hkr.se/pagefiles/35002/gordonwillis.pdf</p> <p>Yin, Ch 12 (pp. 304-310 only) <i>Promise and Challenge of Mixed Methods</i></p> <p>Complete set of memos due; Identify 2 to be evaluated for content (1 will be randomly selected).</p>
<p>Week 15 Dec 5</p>	<p>Course review and Reflection Discussion of Memos, Moving forward in qualitative research</p>	<p>INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT DUE</p>

Participation Rubric

Student participation is imperative to student learning and a successful class. The following rubric outlines how student participation scores will be determined in this course. All students are expected to demonstrate specific characteristics and actions throughout the semester. The quality and quantity of these actions will determine the points assigned for participation.

Students are expected to:

- a. Be punctual, present (in mind and body), and well prepared for class.
- b. Participate fully in class activities and assignments—take an active part in small and large group discussions (without dominating conversations) and pay attention to class lectures.
- c. Make insightful comments, which are informed by required readings and demonstrate reflection on those readings. Specifically, students should come to class with questions, comments, and thoughts on the current readings.
- d. Treat class activities, group discussions, and class discussions as important components of the course, showing respect for fellow classmates and the course material.
- e. Avoid using electronic devices for personal communication or other non-class-oriented purposes during class time.

Each of these criteria will be assessed on a 5-point scale:

- 5 = Student *consistently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 4 = Student *frequently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 3 = Student *intermittently* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 2 = Student *rarely* demonstrated the criterion throughout the semester.
- 1 = Student *did not* demonstrate the criterion throughout the semester.

PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT
RUBRIC FOR EDRS 621 ARTICLE CRITIQUE: 28 points total

	1 Does not meet standards	2 Approaching Standards	3 Meets Standards	4 Exceeds Standards
Writing and Mechanics	Writing has significant stylistic, grammatical or organizational issues AND there are significant errors in APA usage.	Writing has stylistic, grammatical, or organizational issues OR there are significant errors in APA usage.	Writing is clear and APA style has minor or no errors.	Excellent writing APA style has very minor or no errors
Description of how five components of research design are reflected in the article.	There are many inaccuracies in how components of research design are addressed AND several need further development.	There are some inaccuracies in how components of research design are addressed, OR 3 or more need further development.	Each component of research is addressed accurately. One or two need further development.	Each component of research is treated fully and accurately
Analysis of Relationships Among Design Elements	Does not analyze of relationship among design elements.	Analysis of relationships among design elements is present, but either contains inaccuracies or is not adequately developed.	Accurate account of some key relationships among design elements.	Insightful and accurate account of how key research design elements relate.
Analysis of Presentation of Findings	There is minimal analysis of the presentation of findings.	Strengths and limitations of the presentation of findings are discussed. Claims need further explication or leave key gaps.	Strengths and limitations of the presentation of findings are discussed and claims are reasonable and meaningful.	Insightful accounts of the qualities, strengths and limitations of the presentation of findings. Claims are reasonable and meaningful.
Analysis of Validity Issues	Validity issues are not addressed.	Validity issues are discussed but there are some gaps or inaccuracies.	Validity issues and strategies are discussed accurately.	Careful and accurate treatment of validity issues and strategies used. Discussion extends beyond author's account.
Use of Evidence to support Explanations and judgments	There is minimal use evidence to support claims.	Uses evidence to support some claims.	Uses evidence to illustrate and support most claims.	Consistently uses evidence well to explicate, support and illustrate claims.
Reflection Component	There is minimal or no reflection section.	Reflective component is present but is under-developed or lacks connections to analysis.	Reflections are developed and have clear connections to analysis.	Reflections are thoughtfully and fully developed with clear and meaningful connections to analysis.

Rubric for Research Memos

	Unsatisfactory	Emerging	Competent
Response to instructor's written prompt	Does not respond to question(s) or refer to the topic(s) posed in the prompt	Responds at least partially to question(s) and topic(s) in the prompt, but without specific examples or explanation.	Responds fully to all question(s) and topic(s) in the prompt with specific examples and detailed explanation.
Timeliness	Only 3 or fewer memos are handed in on time. The writer does not complete at least 8 memos.	At least 6 memos are handed in on time. The writer completes 8 memos.	All 8 required memos are handed in on time. The writer completes all 8 required memos.

Evaluation Criteria for Interview Project (20 points total)

Informed consent (1 point)

- Written clearly and outlines consent issues appropriately.
- Signed before observation.
- If interviewing a minor (under age 18), informed consent for minor and parent/guardian needed. Minor assent form needs to be written in an appropriately leveled language and be read aloud to the minor.

Coversheet (1 point)

- Contains needed information.

Interview protocol (3 points)

- Questions are open-ended and not leading
- Questions seem organized around a set of research questions but not a direct translation of those questions.
- Questions show insight into ways of getting at research questions that may be difficult for participant to articulate.

Notes during interview (1 point)

- Identify which questions were asked/topics discussed
- Notes on anything that was not recorded.

Interview self-assessment (2 points)

- Completed promptly
- Thorough and insightful reflection on all the categories

Transcribed Interview (4 points)

- Notes put transcribed portion into context
- Verbatim transcription for at least full half hour included, with Interviewer talk italicized and separate from Interviewee
- Interview shows thoughtful listening and questioning in response to interviewee's responses, not just plodding through protocol

Analytic Memo (8 points)

- Issues of reactivity/reflexivity are discussed thoughtfully and in ways specific to the interview
- Thoughtful reflections supported by examples on the strengths/weaknesses of the interview protocol
- Themes generated are insightful and well explicated and supported.
- Next steps in research are discussed and are thoughtful.